



'Growing, Loving and Learning in the arms of Mary'

Catholic Life and Mission Policy 2026

G. Smith

Review September 2028

Catholic Life and Mission

'When Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment, the answer is the same in all three of the Gospels in which the question is asked: to love God with all your mind, heart, soul and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself.

This call to love is at the heart of the educational mission of every Catholic school. It is a mission that is clearly echoed in the Second Vatican Council which teaches that the purpose of an education that is distinctively Christian is threefold (Gravissimum Educationis 2). Its first purpose is to ensure that all pupils understand the faith that gives the school its identity as a Catholic school. The second is to ensure that all are invited to learn how to worship God in spirit and truth through the prayer and liturgy of the Church. The third is the formation of all to live in conformity with the pattern of human goodness, truth and justice that we find in Jesus Christ.'

Through Religious Education pupils are invited to love God with all their mind, through prayer and liturgy with all their heart, soul and strength and through the Catholic life and mission of the school to love their neighbour as themselves.

This policy on Catholic life and mission complements the Religious Education Policy, the Prayer and Liturgy Policy and the Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy.

The aim of this policy is to show how faithfully our school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Mission Statement

"Growing, Loving and Learning in the Arms of Mary"



Our mission statement is highly visible throughout the school environment. It clearly reflects the school's role in the educational mission of the Church, promoting Gospel values and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Jesus Christ is at the centre of our school and Mary, our Mother, provides a distinctive model of faith, love, trust, courage and service.

Our mission statement is a touchstone of school life. It is simple, memorable and accessible to pupils, yet rich enough to shape our shared understanding of what we want every child to become by the end of Year 6. It is revisited at the beginning of each school year and pupils respond creatively through mission artwork. Mission artwork is displayed proudly in the school hall, classrooms and on Religious Education books from Year 1 to Year 6.



At St Mary's, the words of the mission statement are understood in many different ways.

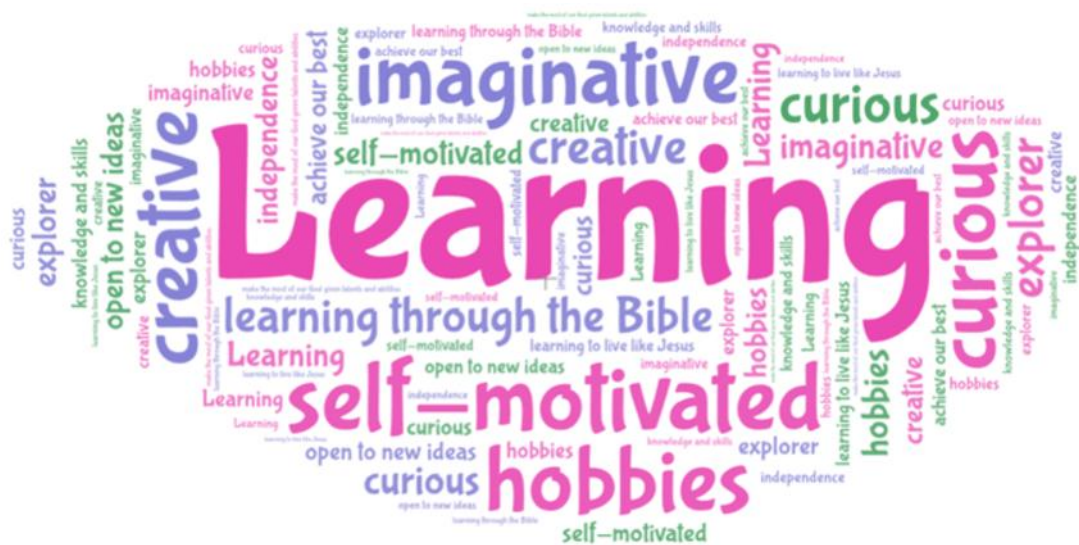
Growing – growing up; growing in love, faith and friendship; growing spiritually and emotionally; growing in knowledge, skills and character; and growing together as children of God.



Loving – loving God, ourselves, our families, friends and community; showing love through words and actions; caring for one another; knowing that God loves us; developing a love of learning; and learning to love like Jesus.



Learning – being curious, creative, imaginative, self-motivated and open to new ideas; becoming increasingly independent; developing knowledge, skills, hobbies and interests; learning through Scripture; learning to live as Jesus taught us; achieving our best and making the most of our God-given talents and abilities.



In the Arms of Mary – recognising Mary as our Mother and model of discipleship. Her “yes” to God helps pupils understand faith, trust, courage, love and service, and her example leads us towards Jesus.



Pupils have a clear understanding of the meaning of our mission statement and can articulate this at an age-appropriate level. They are encouraged to explain how the mission influences their relationships, choices, prayer, learning, leadership and service.

All staff embrace and implement the statement across daily school life through class prayer, whole-school Celebrations of the Word, Mass, Religious Education, relationships, pastoral care, curriculum provision, displays, charitable action, pupil leadership and care for the most vulnerable.

It is shared with parents and the wider community through school signage, newsletters, St Mary's Word and Gospel messages, email footers, school policy documents, the website, parent meetings and opportunities to join prayer, liturgy and school celebrations.



The mission is closely connected to our BREW principles – Belief, Rights, Environment and Wellbeing – which help pupils translate Catholic teaching into practical action and leadership. BREW gives pupils a memorable framework for living the mission across the curriculum and wider life of the school.

Belief – rooted particularly in *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Pupils understand that God speaks to us through Scripture and that his Word calls for a response. Through Scripture, prayer and Religious Education, pupils deepen their relationship with God, while the Mini Vinnies put the Word into action through their "See, Think, Do" approach. Inspired by the Gospel, they identify needs within the school, parish and wider community, reflect and pray together, and undertake practical acts of love, service and social action. In this way, pupils learn not simply to hear the Word of God, but to live it.

Rights – rooted particularly in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Pupils learn that every person possesses God-given dignity and therefore has rights which must be recognised and respected, alongside responsibilities towards others. Through the School Council and wider school life, pupils experience democracy and meaningful participation: they listen to and represent the views of others, engage respectfully with different opinions, identify injustice and contribute to decisions affecting their community. In doing so, pupils learn that their voice matters and that they have a responsibility to use it in the service of justice, human dignity and the common good.

Environment – rooted particularly in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on care for our common home. Pupils learn that creation is a gift from God and that caring for the Earth and for one another is an essential expression of Christian faith. Through the Action Team, Eco-Schools work and stewardship of the school environment, pupils identify environmental concerns, make informed choices and take practical action to protect our common home.

Through initiatives focused on areas such as biodiversity, energy, waste, water and sustainable living, pupils experience their responsibility as stewards of creation and recognise that their choices affect both the planet and other people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. They learn that small, everyday actions, undertaken together, can bring about meaningful change.

Wellbeing – rooted particularly in *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis' encyclical on fraternity and social friendship. Pupils learn that every person is a valued member of one human family and that genuine wellbeing grows through belonging, encounter, friendship and care for one another. Inspired by the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Wellbeing Champions help to create a culture in which pupils notice others, listen with compassion, celebrate difference and ensure that no one is deliberately left out or overlooked. Through pupil-led initiatives promoting friendship, inclusion, kindness, peaceful relationships and emotional wellbeing, pupils learn both to seek support when they need it and to recognise when others may need their care. In this way, they understand that building a community in which everyone can flourish is an expression of their Catholic faith.

Our Mission Statement, "Growing, Loving and Learning in the Arms of Mary," and our BREW principles of Belief, Rights, Environment and Wellbeing are firmly rooted in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Together, they ensure that our Catholic faith is not simply something that pupils learn about, but something they are encouraged and empowered to live out each day.

The four BREW principles are not separate initiatives; they provide a coherent and practical framework through which pupils learn how the Gospel and the teachings of the Church shape the way we live, learn, make choices, treat others, care for creation and contribute to our community. Through Belief, pupils are called to hear and respond to the Word of God; through Rights, they recognise and uphold the God-given dignity of every person and work for justice and the common good; through Environment, they accept their responsibility to care for our common home; and through Wellbeing, they learn the importance of solidarity, friendship, compassion, inclusion and care for others.

In this way, our Mission, BREW principles and Catholic Social Teaching work together to form pupils who understand that faith calls us to action. Inspired by the example of Mary and centred on Jesus Christ, pupils are encouraged to use their God-given gifts, recognise the needs of others, make responsible choices and take meaningful action in service of their school, parish, local community and wider world.

By the time pupils leave St Mary's, our aspiration is that they will understand that growing, loving and learning in the arms of Mary means becoming people who recognise the dignity of every person, seek justice and peace, care for creation, stand alongside those in need and contribute to the common good. In doing so, they are equipped to continue living as faithful, compassionate and responsible disciples of Christ, putting Catholic Social Teaching into practice in the choices they make and the lives they lead.



School Environment

The distinctive Catholic identity of St Mary's is clearly reflected in the physical environment of the school. Sacred images, symbols, prayer spaces and purposeful displays provide a visible witness to our faith and create an environment that supports prayer, reflection, learning and a strong sense of belonging. Every effort is made to ensure that the school is welcoming, well cared for, spiritually uplifting and aesthetically pleasing, reflecting our belief that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and is therefore worthy of dignity and respect. Classrooms and shared spaces celebrate our Catholic identity while encouraging pupil contribution and ownership.

As a result, pupils recognise that their faith is central to the life of the school and understand the meaning and significance of the Catholic signs, symbols and sacred spaces around them. They experience an environment in which they feel welcomed, valued and included, and develop a sense of responsibility for caring for their school and one another. Opportunities for prayer and reflection support pupils' spiritual development, while displays and shared spaces reinforce the school's Mission, celebrate pupils' faith and achievements, and make connections between Religious Education, Catholic Social Teaching and everyday life. In this way, the environment is not simply a reflection of our Catholic identity; it actively supports pupils in understanding, experiencing and living out the mission and values of St Mary's.



Catholic Curriculum

'The Catholic vision of education is distinctive and the beliefs it holds, the values and aspirations it has must inspire the whole of the curriculum.' (NBRIA The Distinctive Curriculum of the Catholic School)

Our school is a community of learning with a distinctive educational philosophy which is based on the Gospels. Whilst Religious Education is at the core of the core curriculum, this philosophy permeates all our curriculum and activities as we recognise the needs of each individual member of the community.

Religious Education follows the Religious Education Directory through the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle's The Way. The curriculum develops pupils' knowledge of Scripture, Catholic belief and religious vocabulary and supports them to understand, discern and respond. Appropriate adaptation enables pupils with SEND and other additional needs to access ambitious religious content while maintaining high expectations.

At an age-appropriate level children are introduced to the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, using appropriate Catholic resources. We explore Scripture and Church teaching, including Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti, to build pupils' moral compass and enable them to respond to social, moral and ethical issues in the world. Our BREW framework

makes these connections particularly visible through Belief, Rights, Environment and Wellbeing and leads pupils towards prayer, leadership, charitable outreach and work for social justice.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education is taught in a Catholic context recognising that we are all made in God's image and likeness. Its close relationship with Rights and Wellbeing reinforces human dignity, love, responsibility and respect. See our R(S)HE Policy.

Other faiths and worldviews are taught as part of the Religious Education curriculum. Learning about the religion and cultures of those who do not share the Catholic faith is one of the ways in which Catholic schools embody the call to love one's neighbour. It prepares our children for life in modern Britain, giving them an understanding of the beliefs of others and encouraging respectful encounter.

Charitable outreach

We aim to foster and develop an awareness of the needs of others: locally, nationally and globally, and promote a spirit of generosity and compassion as taught by Jesus Christ. Through Catholic Social Teaching and the principles expressed within Fratelli Tutti, pupils are taught to stand in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable and to understand that faith calls them to action.

Charitable outreach is connected to pupil voice and leadership. Pupils are encouraged not only to take part in fundraising but also to identify needs, suggest causes and understand why their response reflects the Gospel and the mission of the Church.



Examples of support across school include:

CAFOD and other Catholic charitable initiatives, including opportunities linked to Lent and Catholic Social Teaching.

Macmillan Cancer Support, including fundraising led within the school community.

The Poppy Appeal and Remembrance activities.

Local community support, including Open House and food bank initiatives.

Age-appropriate charitable projects chosen or supported by year groups and pupil leadership groups, enabling pupils to respond to local, national and global needs.

Pupils are always encouraged to help each other as well as their parents, teachers and other people in the community. It is our aim that our whole-school ethos fosters and nurtures a generous giving of self and an appreciation and respect for others.

Working for Social Justice

Pupils are taught the importance of standing up for social justice as an important aspect of Christian life. Catholic Social Teaching and BREW provide a framework through which pupils can recognise injustice, reflect on Church teaching and take age-appropriate action.

Planned opportunities include environmental action and stewardship through the Action Team and Eco-Schools work; pupil voice, democracy, rights and responsibility through the School Council; service and charitable action through Mini Vinnies; wellbeing, belonging and inclusion through Wellbeing Champions; and opportunities to engage with local community action, including Citizens Tyne and Wear.

Through these opportunities pupils learn that human dignity, the common good, solidarity, care for creation and participation are not abstract ideas but principles to be lived through their choices and actions.



Chaplaincy

The spirituality and prayer life of the school are an evident part of its Catholic life and mission. The Prayer and Liturgy Policy details the school provision. Chaplaincy at St Mary's is understood as a shared ministry in which staff, pupils, the Parish Priest and pupil leadership groups contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the whole community.



Pupils experience a rich range of Catholic prayer including Scripture, traditional prayer, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, ACTS prayer, Godly Play, meditation, imaginative contemplation, Christian Art, liturgical music and Lectio

Divina. A whole-school Formation of Prayer progression supports pupils from participation in Nursery towards increasingly independent planning, leadership and evaluation by Year 6.



Pupils use Gather, Word, Respond and Mission to help them plan and lead prayer. Older pupils increasingly select Scripture, prayer, music and symbols, proclaim the Word and explain their choices.



The Eucharist is an important part of provision. From Year 2 onwards pupils have opportunities to experience Mass, supported by sessions with Father Chris and celebrations in school and at St Mary's, St Cecilia's and Oaklea Convent. These experiences connect curriculum knowledge with authentic participation in the worshipping life of the Church.

School Community

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a welcoming place for children, families and members of staff from all faiths and none. Recognising that Christ is at the centre of our school, we strive to support and value each member, especially the most vulnerable.

Our behaviour and relationships are driven by our belief that all are unique and made in God's image and likeness. Staff model compassion, patience, forgiveness and respect, and intolerance is challenged. Strong pastoral relationships and the school's inclusion provision, including two inclusion hubs, provide tangible support for pupils with additional needs and those experiencing vulnerability or difficulty.

The BREW principles provide a shared language for belonging and action: Belief nurtures faith and purpose; Rights promotes dignity, respect and participation; Environment develops stewardship and responsibility; and Wellbeing promotes belonging, resilience, care and social friendship.

St Mary's recognises that it is part of a family of Catholic schools and works collaboratively within Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, with local Catholic schools and across the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. Through Religious Education and the wider Catholic life of the school, children learn about the local and universal Church and understand that they belong to a global family.

At St Mary's all are encouraged to live life to the full and reach their God-given potential. Staff formation and professional development develop understanding of the mission, BREW, prayer and liturgy, Religious Education and wider Catholic life so that all staff, regardless of previous experience, can contribute confidently and authentically.



Parents

Parents are the first teachers of their children and we work in partnership with them. They are encouraged to support Religious Education, prayer and the wider Catholic formation of their children, including preparation for the Sacraments where appropriate.

Parents and carers are invited to participate in the Catholic life of the school through whole-school and class prayer and liturgy, Masses, celebrations, curriculum meetings, charitable and community activities and other opportunities

across the liturgical year. Prayer and Gospel messages are also shared through school communication so that the life of faith can extend into the home.

The mission statement and BREW principles are shared with families through school signage, newsletters, St Mary's Word, Gospel messages, the school website, email communication, policy documents and parent meetings. Parents are encouraged to share their views through questionnaires, meetings and parents' evenings, and the school values open communication and partnership.



Parish Links

Links with the local parish are a vital part of Catholic life in school. St Mary's works closely with the Parish Priest, Father Chris, and the wider Catholic community. Pupils have opportunities to celebrate Mass and prayer both in school and within local Catholic settings, including St Mary's, St Cecilia's and Oaklea Convent.

The Parish Priest supports pupils' understanding and participation in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church, including through Mass sessions and celebrations. Parish links help pupils connect what they learn in Religious Education with lived Catholic faith and enable school and parish to support one another in prayer, worship, formation and service.

Communications and opportunities within the wider Catholic community are shared with families where appropriate, strengthening pupils' sense that St Mary's belongs to the local and universal Church.



The Coordinator for Catholic Life and Mission

The Headteacher, working with the Religious Education leader, senior leaders, Foundation Governors, staff, Parish Priest and pupil leaders, ensures that Catholic life and mission remain central to the strategic and daily life of St Mary's. The Coordinator for Catholic Life and Mission is Gemma Smith.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Catholic Life and Mission Coordinator, Headteacher and senior leadership team and is evaluated and reviewed every two years.

Monitoring draws upon pupil and staff voice, parent voice, governor oversight, observations, curriculum monitoring and evidence of pupil leadership and action. Particular attention is given to how well pupils understand and live the mission and BREW principles, so that evaluation focuses on impact rather than simply on the activities provided.

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of policy review conducted by the governors.

This religious education policy will be reviewed in October 2027.

Signed by the Headteacher: *Martin Clephane*

Person responsible for implementation of policy: (RE Subject Leader) *Gemma Smith*

